United Nations E/AC.51/2018/7

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 March 2018

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-eighth session
Organizational session, 19 April 2018
Substantive session, 4–29 June 2018*
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda**
Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session (see A/37/38, para. 362) to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on the evaluations submitted to the Committee. The present triennial review determined the extent to which the six recommendations emanating from the OIOS programme evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) were implemented.

The recommendations addressed various aspects of ECLAC relevance and effectiveness in executing its mandate. At the conclusion of its fifty-fifth session, the Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the OIOS evaluation report. The triennial review determined that three recommendations (recommendations 1, 3 and 5) were implemented, while three recommendations (recommendations 2, 4 and 6) were partially implemented. The full impact of the implementation of the six recommendations thus far could not be assessed as ECLAC had not yet fully operationalized some of the recommended policies and frameworks. For the recommendations that were implemented, some evidence of concrete positive outcomes was noted.

* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.
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Recommendation 1 addressed the need for ECLAC to review its strategies and structure to more effectively identify synergies in its programme structure and design its strategies to better respond to the thematic priorities, given the reality of resource constraints. ECLAC indicated that assessing its strategies and structure to achieve this aim was an ongoing management process rather than a one-time exercise based on a specific document. To implement the recommendation, an ECLAC interdivisional working group met to ensure the alignment of ECLAC activities with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An important realignment and restructuring was proposed in the strategic framework for ECLAC for 2018–2019: the integration of subprogramme 4, Financing for development, with subprogramme 3, Macroeconomic policies and growth. The impact of this merger will be evident following its implementation in 2018.

Recommendation 2 addressed the need for ECLAC to develop a country-by-country strategy as ECLAC did not maintain regular communications and effective liaison relationships with officials in all relevant technical ministries throughout the region, resulting in low awareness of and access to ECLAC outputs among stakeholders. ECLAC developed a draft knowledge management strategy to increase the effectiveness of ECLAC knowledge dissemination, overhauled its website and launched a digital repository. The strategy has yet to be approved. In addition, the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was used as a new platform for ECLAC to engage with member State representatives to identify countries' specific demands and needs for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. This resulted in positive developments and helped the Commission to reshape its programme of work to respond to country needs. However, ECLAC did not institute annual consultations with individual member States.

Recommendation 3 addressed the need for ECLAC to formalize mechanisms to incorporate the priorities of the Caribbean member States, as reflected in the decisions of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), into divisional work programmes. At the thirty-sixth session of the Commission in 2016, appreciation was expressed for the support provided by the ECLAC secretariat to the members of CDCC. In 2017, ECLAC further implemented the recommendation by issuing an internal memorandum as a guidance note, advising Directors of selected subprogrammes to take specific CDCC decisions and resolutions into account in their current and future work programmes. An important follow-up to this was the establishment of the Caribbean debt for climate adaptation swap initiative in 2017. As formal guidance was issued only in 2017, it was not possible in the review to assess its impact on the integration of support for Caribbean priorities, including in the work of ECLAC headquarters divisions.

Recommendation 4 addressed the need for ECLAC to develop an outreach strategy to improve the dissemination and promotion of ECLAC publications as ECLAC had not fully ensured that the relevant knowledge products were reaching national policymakers and other audiences. To monitor access to publications and other information outputs, the ECLAC Publications and Web Services Division tracked visits to the ECLAC website using appropriate analytical tools. This allowed ECLAC to monitor the number of users and page visits, which decreased between 2015 and 2016, as well as pages viewed per session and duration of visit, which improved over the same period. The draft knowledge management strategy outlined initiatives to produce, manage and ensure the effective distribution of knowledge products and raise public awareness of those products, and identified the main risks and challenges

involved, among other things. The draft strategy however, was yet to be approved and implemented and did not include a budget or a timeline for implementation.

Recommendation 5 addressed the need to strengthen performance monitoring and results assessment. ECLAC implemented the recommendation by capitalizing on United Nations institutionalized programme monitoring mechanisms such as the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS). ECLAC strengthened the process by supplementing IMDIS advisory notes with monitoring and reporting guidelines specific to the Commission (under revision) and "hands-on" guidance notes issued by the Programme Planning and Operations Division to the substantive divisions. In addition, ECLAC created tools for surveying work related to technical assistance and publications. An OIOS audit, conducted by the Internal Audit Division, of selected subprogrammes and their related technical cooperation projects at ECLAC concluded that ECLAC had instituted effective mechanisms to manage subprogrammes. Staff interviewed were, in general, satisfied with the quality of monitoring and reporting, including the reporting in IMDIS.

Recommendation 6 addressed the need to strengthen the ECLAC evaluation function by, inter alia, establishing a separate evaluation unit. The reinforced ECLAC evaluation team continued to be located in the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit supervised by the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis. Requests for additional budget funding to set up an independent unit were denied by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. To enhance the independence of the evaluation function, ECLAC introduced firewalls, such as separate representation of the evaluation team at meetings. In addition, ECLAC revised its evaluation policy and strategy and published evaluation guidelines in 2017. Follow-up to the implementation of evaluation recommendations was institutionalized and lessons learned and recommendations covering the period 2011–2014 were made available to all ECLAC staff in early 2016. The number of evaluations conducted increased, however, no subprogramme evaluations were conducted during the period 2015–2017.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session in 2015, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, on the programme evaluation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (E/AC.51/2015/6).

2. The Committee expressed appreciation for the report and the positive overall assessment of the work of ECLAC, including its support in the development of policies, the promotion of regional integration and the harmonization of statistics, and that OIOS had recognized some of the key strengths of and challenges faced by ECLAC. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraph 74 of the report.

3. The present report is issued pursuant to a triennial review of the recommendations and examines the status of implementation of the six recommendations contained in the evaluation. The review also addressed, where possible, the extent to which implementation of the recommendations contributed to programme changes.

4. The methodology for the triennial review included:

(a) Review and analysis of the biennial progress reports on the status of recommendations, which are monitored through the OIOS recommendation's database;

(b) Analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from ECLAC on various topics related to the recommendations;

(c) Remote interviews conducted with a purposive sample of ECLAC staff.

5. The report incorporates comments received from ECLAC during the drafting process. A final draft was shared with ECLAC for its formal comments, which are contained in the annex. OIOS expresses its appreciation to ECLAC for the cooperation it extended in the preparation of the report.

II. Results

6. The Economic Commission for Latin America was established in 1948 as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. By resolution 1984/67, it was renamed the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. It serves 46 member States and 13 associate members. The ECLAC mandate is to promote economic, social and environmentally sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean through international cooperation, to which end it: (a) serves as a regional forum and facilitator for consensus-building; (b) provides analysis, research and evidence-based policy alternatives; and (c) provides advisory services (technical assistance) to facilitate the formulation, adoption and implementation of development policies. At the time of the evaluation, the ECLAC programme of work was delivered through 14 subprogrammes grouped into five thematic clusters.

7. In its evaluation, OIOS noted that ECLAC had facilitated regional and subregional decision-making in some critical areas and, through its research and analysis, had increased an overall understanding of the various issues affecting the region and supported the strengthening and harmonization of statistics in the region.

However, it concluded that the knowledge produced was not disseminated and that ECLAC was less effective in building capacity in the Caribbean region. In that regard, OIOS made six recommendations to ECLAC: to review the strategy in support of its mandates; to develop a country-by-country engagement strategy; to formalize mechanisms to incorporate the priorities of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee into divisional work programmes; to develop outreach strategies; to strengthen its performance monitoring mechanisms; and to strengthen its evaluation functions and practices.

8. In its review, OIOS determined that three of the six recommendations were implemented (recommendations 1, 3 and 5), while three (recommendations 2, 4 and 6) were partially implemented. There is some evidence of concrete positive outcomes resulting from the implemented recommendations. The implementation status of each of the six recommendations is described below.

Recommendation 1
Review of ECLAC strategies and structure

9. Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

> ECLAC should, within its mandate, assess its strategies and structure in order to achieve greater convergence between its thematic areas of work and its three core functions and to ensure the effective use of its available resources.
>
> **Indicator of achievement**: Document reviewing the strategies and structure used in the preparation of the budget.

10. This recommendation was based on the evaluation result that the growing demand for ECLAC work had placed enormous pressure on the ECLAC organizational structure and available resources, creating unwieldy structures in some areas and stretching resources too thinly in general. ECLAC needed to review its strategies and structure to more effectively identify synergies in its programme structure and design its strategies to better respond to the thematic priorities, given the reality of resource constraints.

11. Staff interviewed indicated that the thematic areas of work and organizational structures were constantly assessed as part of the core business of the ECLAC secretariat. ECLAC implemented the recommendation by reviewing its strategies and structure during the preparation of the biennial strategic framework and programme of work. In 2015, an interdivisional working group began to meet to ensure the alignment of ECLAC activities with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, to realign and restructure its programme of work to better respond to the demands and needs of member States, and to strengthen the support that the Commission provides at the request of the countries in the region, a proposal was put forward in the strategic framework for 2018–2019 to merge subprogramme 4, Financing for development, with subprogramme 3, Macroeconomic policies and growth. This proposal was endorsed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The proposed strategic framework for the period 2018–2019 (A/71/6 (Prog.18), para. 18.6) indicated the following:

> "The integration of subprogramme 4, Financing for development, which is focused on the mobilization of resources, with subprogramme 3, Macroeconomic policies and growth, is hereby proposed in response to the increasing demands from member States for analysis and policy proposals to tackle the new challenges for macroeconomic policymaking within the

framework and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. A key element of both agendas is a focus on domestic resource mobilization and its complementarities with external resource mobilization. The integration of the two subprogrammes will increase the capacity to design new macroeconomic policies — fiscal, monetary and financial — geared towards mobilizing domestic and external resources in line with the goals and targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 8, "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", and Goal 17, "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development". With regard to fiscal policy, this will permit strengthening the analysis of the links between domestic fiscal efforts and fiscal coordination and cooperation at the global level, which play a central role in assessing the capacity of countries to increase their ability to mobilize domestic financing for development. It will also facilitate the introduction of new areas of work that arise from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, namely, illicit financial flows, tax coordination and transfer pricing, among others. Synergies resulting from the integration of the two subprogrammes will allow ECLAC to better respond to demands from member countries in these new areas, as part of the fit-for-purpose efforts carried out by the Commission".

13. Assessing the impact of this merger in terms of ensuring the effective use of available resources will only be possible once the changes have been fully implemented. Combining the two subprogrammes already led to the merging of two analytical outputs into a single comprehensive report for the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development.

14. This recommendation was implemented. However, results will not be achieved until after the implementation of the proposed new structure in the biennium 2018–2019. OIOS emphasizes that reviewing organizational priorities and structures to optimize support for member States is an ongoing responsibility of ECLAC senior management.

Recommendation 2
Develop a country-by-country engagement strategy

14. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

ECLAC should develop and implement an engagement strategy vis-à-vis national policymakers in technical ministries throughout the region. Such a strategy should include: (a) regular dissemination of information about the work of ECLAC; and (b) annual consultations with Governments (both central agencies and technical ministries), jointly undertaken by headquarters divisions and subregional headquarters, to brief them on relevant planned, ongoing and completed work and to discuss the country's needs and priorities.

Indicator of achievement: Approved and implemented engagement strategy.

15. This recommendation was based on mixed experiences at ECLAC in maintaining regular communications and effective liaison relationships with officials in relevant technical ministries throughout the region, and the resultant low awareness of and access to ECLAC outputs among stakeholders.

16. The recommendation was accepted by ECLAC with some qualifications: "Being a regional commission, as compared with specialized agencies, funds and programmes, ECLAC has a programme of work with a regional scope, both in

geographical terms and in thematic areas of interest for member States. In this context, ECLAC maintains continuous dialogue with government authorities and other stakeholders on the region's development agenda, their needs and priorities with regard to the work of its subsidiary bodies, and the provision of technical cooperation services at the national level. ECLAC regularly disseminates its work and discusses with member States' authorities their changing priorities and needs. Nevertheless, national strategies should be driven primarily by the demands of member States, with full respect for their own agendas and timetable, so as to avoid any misconception of the ECLAC secretariat's being prescriptive, and respecting countries' particular needs and political circumstances" (see E/AC.51/2015/6, annex).

17. ECLAC drafted a knowledge management strategy with the aim of addressing ECLAC initiatives from within and engaging with counterparts in member countries, as well as the general public, in the management and dissemination of knowledge. The strategy was yet to be approved by the Executive Secretary. Staff interviewed indicated that the strategy fulfilled the purpose of strengthening the organization's outreach, including to national policymakers.

18. In addition, ECLAC ensured the regular dissemination of publications and information about its work. At the end of 2014, ECLAC redesigned its website (www.cepal.org), in terms of both architecture and content, and launched a digital repository (http://repositorio.cepal.org). The Publications and Web Services Division, with the help of a customer relationship management system, regularly analysed ECLAC data. The analysis indicated that Governments were among the largest user groups of ECLAC information services, accounting for over 25 per cent.

19. Staff interviewed indicated that regular interactions and consultations with member States took place within ECLAC subsidiary bodies and during the course of intergovernmental events and missions. For example, the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development was used as a new platform for ECLAC to engage with member State representatives. The Forum was State-led and open to the participation of Latin American and Caribbean countries, convened under the auspices of ECLAC. It involved member States represented by ECLAC, the private sector and civil society, as well as representatives of the subsidiary bodies of ECLAC, development banks, United Nations agencies and regional integration blocs. ECLAC used the Forum to identify the specific demands and needs of countries in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, which helped it to reshape the programme of work of the Commission to respond to those needs. The Forum also facilitated the exchange of experiences between countries through the presentations of voluntary national reviews, allowing ECLAC to showcase the technical cooperation undertaken in various countries. The first meeting of the Forum took place in Mexico City on 26–28 April 2017.

20. ECLAC did not, however, institute annual consultations with individual member States as required by the recommendation. Staff interviewed reiterated that engagement with ECLAC member States was complex and multi-layered, and that, given its mandate as a regional commission and the demand-driven nature of its work, it would not be deemed appropriate for ECLAC to organize annual bilateral discussions with national ministries.

21. This recommendation was partially implemented, in anticipation of the imminent approval and implementation of the knowledge management strategy and the holding by ECLAC of annual consultations with individual member States.

Recommendation 3
Formalize mechanisms to incorporate priorities of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee into divisional work programmes

22. Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

> ECLAC should put in place a formal mechanism to ensure that the decisions of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee are incorporated into the work programmes of all the relevant headquarters substantive divisions.
>
> **Indicator of achievement**: Guidance note to divisions formulated.

23. This recommendation was based on the evaluation result that ECLAC did not prioritize the Caribbean, despite the increased targeted efforts of senior management. The evaluation identified the need for further mainstreaming of Caribbean priorities into the ECLAC programme of work, including its research and analysis work, in order to increase the organization's relevance to countries in the Caribbean subregion. The need for ECLAC to define the roles and responsibilities of headquarters divisions (both substantive divisions and programme support) to support the implementation of the decisions of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) was identified.

24. CDCC is a permanent subsidiary body of ECLAC, established in 1975 to promote and strengthen economic and social cooperation and integration among the countries of the Caribbean, and to promote cooperation between them and the countries and the integration processes of Latin America and the Caribbean. Staff interviewed indicated that the incorporation and implementation of CDCC decisions into the work of the substantive divisions at ECLAC headquarters had improved. At the thirty-sixth session of the Commission in 2016, while presenting the report on the activities carried out by CDCC, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Aviation of Saint Kitts and Nevis expressed appreciation for the support provided by ECLAC to the members of CDCC and its efforts to include the Caribbean in flagship publications.[1]

25. The report on the activities of CDCC from January 2014 to December 2015 provided a wealth of information about the main results achieved and the activities carried out under subprogramme 13, Subregional activities in the Caribbean, including in connection with CDCC. For instance, it reported that ECLAC had developed the Caribbean Development Portal (http://caribbean.eclac.org) to enhance the diffusion of knowledge about the current state of economic and social development in the Caribbean.

26. Moreover, an internal memorandum was issued in November 2017 to provide guidance on incorporating the decisions of CDCC into the ECLAC programme of work. In the note, the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis indicated that ECLAC had made great efforts to increasingly incorporate the Caribbean subregion into the research and analysis carried out by the substantive divisions and the subregional headquarters in Mexico, as well as into the data published in ECLAC flagship publications.

27. In preparation for the strategic framework and the programme of work for the biennium 2020–2021, the guidance note reminded the Directors of the Economic Development Division and the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean to ensure that decisions and resolutions taken by CDCC at its twenty-sixth session in 2016 were incorporated into their current and future programmes of work, as applicable. The

[1] Report of the thirty-sixth session, Mexico City, 23–27 May 2016.

guidance note pinpointed: (a) CDCC endorsement of the debt swap proposal; (b) two requests for the ECLAC secretariat to continue to provide assistance to member States with respect to mainstreaming disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction initiatives in their development plans; and (c) the need to provide institutional support to facilitate synergies in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway at the national and regional levels.

28. A response to the guidance note from the subregional headquarters for the Caribbean outlined how the CDCC decisions in question were being addressed. For instance, ECLAC had established the Caribbean debt for climate adaptation swap initiative and set up an inter-agency task force for its implementation. The initiative appeared to have garnered a lot of momentum and a high-level event in support of the Caribbean countries ravaged by hurricanes in 2017 was successfully organized.

29. As formal guidance was issued only in 2017, the review was unable to assess its impact on the integration of support for Caribbean priorities, including in the work of the divisions at ECLAC headquarters. A further guidance note is due following the twenty-seventh session of CDCC in 2018.

30. The recommendation was implemented.

Recommendation 4
Develop an outreach strategy

31. Recommendation 4 reads as follows:

> ECLAC should improve the effectiveness of its knowledge dissemination by developing an outreach strategy that guides the issuance of every knowledge product (publication) that it delivers. Such a strategy should include an action plan, a budget and measures for the monitoring of the output's utility.
>
> **Indicator of achievement**: Approved outreach strategy.

32. This recommendation required ECLAC to develop an outreach strategy based on the evaluation result that the dissemination and promotion of ECLAC publications were not considered a priority and ECLAC had not fully ensured that knowledge reached national policymakers and other audiences.

33. The recommendation was accepted by ECLAC with a slight adaptation: "ECLAC will develop an outreach strategy at an aggregate level rather than at the individual output level, which could prove to be unattainable in practical terms. The strategy at the aggregate department level could be flexibly tailored to the specificities of each knowledge output" (see E/AC.51/2015/6, annex).

34. ECLAC implemented several activities to enhance information dissemination. At the end of 2014, ECLAC redesigned its website (www.cepal.org), in terms of both architecture and content. A central digital repository (http://repositorio.cepal.org) was launched, which in December 2017 provided access to more than 35,000 digital publications, including the first ECLAC publication dated 1948. To monitor access to publications and other information outputs, the Publications and Web Services Division tracked visits to the website using appropriate analytical tools. The 2016 analysis indicated that the ECLAC website generated over 3.2 million users and 9.3 million page views. A comparison with 2015 indicated a decrease in visits in terms of the number of users (by 15.4 per cent) and page visits (by 13.35 per cent), but an

improvement in quality in terms of pages viewed per session (by 2.61 per cent) and duration of visit (by 11.43 per cent).[2]

35. ECLAC also used a variety of social media platforms to reach member States and other target audiences. In 2016, Facebook attracted the most traffic (120,687 sessions), followed by Twitter (31,851 sessions),[3] which reflected the same trend as in 2015. ECLAC also disseminated email updates. During 2016, approximately 21,500 contacts were added to the electronic subscriptions system, which already had a total of over 54,000 contacts.[4]

36. ECLAC amended the format of its reporting on the press coverage, downloads and utilization of five of its six annual flagship publications. Starting in 2015, it produced short infographic reports in Spanish ("Informe de análisis de publicación") on each publication. Statistics showed that two months after the launch of the *Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean 2016*, electronic downloads totalled 15,667 in three languages.[5] Most users of the publication belonged to universities, research centres and public organizations.

37. A knowledge management strategy (mentioned in recommendation 2) had been drafted and awaited approval by the Executive Secretary. The strategy listed initiatives to, among other objectives, produce, manage and ensure the effective distribution of knowledge products, strengthen capacities, facilitate the exchange of experience and raise public awareness, and identified the main risks and challenges involved. The draft strategy, however, did not envisage a budget or a timeline for implementation. The responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the strategy was delegated to the Publications and Web Services Division.

38. This recommendation was partially implemented, in anticipation of the imminent approval of the draft knowledge management strategy. ECLAC needs to ensure that the strategy also includes a budget and timeline for implementation.

Recommendation 5
Strengthen performance monitoring mechanisms

39. Recommendation 5 reads as follows:

> ECLAC should strengthen its performance monitoring mechanisms and ensure the consistency of data collection methods and tools used by divisions to support result assessments. Collected performance data, as well as identified lessons learned, should be discussed at the strategic planning and monitoring meetings.
>
> **Indicator of achievement**: Updated and approved guidelines for monitoring and evaluation.

40. This recommendation was based on the evaluation result that practices for measuring, collecting, recording and using performance data, especially at the outcome level, were inconsistent among ECLAC substantive divisions.

41. ECLAC used the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) for programme monitoring by the substantive divisions. The uploading to IMDIS of evidence on results achieved by the substantive divisions was

[2] "Reporte de métricas sitio web CEPAL: análisis anual 2016".
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] "Informe de análisis de publicación: *Balance Preliminar de las Economías de América Latina y el Caribe 2016*".

institutionalized in 2014–2015. IMDIS reporting was guided by advisory notes issued by the Department of Management. To strengthen this process, the ECLAC Programme Planning and Operations Division supplemented the IMDIS advisory notes with monitoring and reporting guidelines specific to the Commission and "hands-on" guidance notes, such as a guidance note on 24-month review. The ECLAC monitoring and reporting guidelines were under revision and a new draft was expected to be issued imminently. In addition, project monitoring for the Development Account projects was governed by its specific Development Account methodology. Staff interviewed were satisfied with the quality of ECLAC monitoring and reporting, which were guided by the United Nations Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2016/6).

42. The updated ECLAC evaluation policy and strategy and the evaluation guidelines, both published in 2017, provided additional guidance to staff on periodically reviewing programme implementation and assessing whether a programme is on track to achieve the results expected at the end of the biennium. In its review of both documents, however, OIOS indicated that neither document determined key elements of an institutional monitoring system, such as what is monitored, when, how, by whom and for whom.

43. An audit of selected subprogrammes and their related technical cooperation projects at ECLAC, conducted by the Internal Audit Division of OIOS in 2016, concluded that ECLAC had instituted effective mechanisms to manage subprogrammes (based on a sample of four subprogrammes audited). In the audit report, it was noted that the following institutional mechanisms provided strategic direction and overall supervision to deliver performance results: (a) annual programme implementation plans approved by the ECLAC senior management team and monitored every six months; (b) central coordination and guidance by the Programme Planning and Operations Division to develop and report on work programmes and reduce the risk of overlap or duplication of activities; and (c) biannual strategic meetings, annual directors' retreats and monthly monitoring meetings, weekly senior management team meetings, designated working groups and biannual town hall meetings. However, the audit also reported that IMDIS records had not been completely updated owing to the turnover in the monitoring focal point position in July 2015; and partial non-compliance was also because of insufficient training on the IMDIS reporting functions owing to unavailability of resources.

44. In addition, ECLAC revamped and strengthened its monitoring and evaluation network by implementing periodic meetings, support sessions and training for division monitoring and evaluation focal points, and day-to-day contact with the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit became more fluid. The Programme Planning and Operations Division also created model surveys in Spanish and English for outcome-level data collection by the substantive divisions and provided guidance on request. These included: a publications survey; a technical assistance exit survey; a technical assistance follow-up survey; a workshop exit survey; and a workshop follow-up survey. Survey results were collated and reported in IMDIS.

45. While ECLAC had undertaken efforts to strengthen its performance monitoring and accountability, staff interviewed suggested that, following the introduction of Umoja (United Nations enterprise resource planning system) in 2015, the discontinuation of some monitoring tools such as the mission reporting system that built on IMDIS, had been initially somewhat disruptive.

46. This recommendation was implemented.

Recommendation 6
Strengthen the evaluation function and practices

47. Recommendation 6 reads as follows:

> ECLAC should strengthen its evaluation function by establishing a separate evaluation unit with the necessary competencies and resources; identifying and undertaking periodic, risk-based evaluations across the subprogrammes; and following up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations to promote accountability.
>
> **Indicator of achievement**: Revised and approved terms of reference of the evaluation unit.

48. This recommendation was based on the evaluation result that the coverage and impact of ECLAC evaluation work remained insufficient owing to the lack of a clear mechanism to determine evaluation priorities; insufficient follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations; and questions around evaluation capacities, the level of dedicated resources and reporting lines.

49. The ECLAC evaluation function had not changed in terms of structure since the evaluation of ECLAC and was still situated within the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit of the Programme Planning and Operations Division. When preparing its programme budget for 2018–2019 in November 2016, ECLAC requested permission from the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts to use savings from Umoja to finance the separation of the evaluation function. The request was declined on the basis that the use of Umoja efficiency gains cannot be authorized for the establishment of a new unit, as the OIOS recommendation did not constitute a new mandate by the General Assembly, which could have supported an increase in proposed resources for ECLAC for the biennium 2018–2019.

50. The evaluation function operated under the supervision of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis, who headed the Programme Planning and Operations Division and reported directly to the Executive Secretary. At the end of 2017, the evaluation team consisted of one full-time staff member at the P4 level and one staff member at the G4 level who functioned as an evaluation assistant, together with the partial use of the services of an administrative assistant in the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit. While the evaluation function remained within the Division, ECLAC strengthened it by separating it from other management functions and its independence was ensured to the extent possible. Certain firewalls were set up, for instance, through separate representation of the evaluation team at meetings (rather than being represented by the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit). Staff interviewed considered this set-up a satisfactory compromise under the circumstances, furthermore, in general, ECLAC faced limited resources and the abolishment of posts, and it was therefore financially impossible to include a separate evaluation unit in any future budget proposals.

51. To further strengthen its evaluation function, a revised ECLAC evaluation policy and strategy was published in October 2017. The document described the background and context of the evaluation function within the United Nations system; outlined the objectives, guiding concepts and principles of evaluation at ECLAC; described the institutional framework of the evaluation function and the evaluation process; detailed the use of evaluation and follow-up mechanisms; and presented the ECLAC strategy for coordinating and sharing knowledge with other institutions within and outside the United Nations system. The evaluation policy and strategy also

addressed the specific responsibilities of the evaluation function with respect to the planning and governance of terms of evaluation, the management of evaluations, and the communication and dissemination of evaluation results.

52. The evaluation policy and strategy indicated that ECLAC aimed to allocate 2 to 5 per cent of the total budget of each programme and project to evaluation and established that, in order to attain that benchmark, all Development Account projects needed to allocate between 2 and 3 per cent of their respective total budgets to conduct an external evaluation of the project. Furthermore, and whenever feasible, all extrabudgetary projects and programmes over $200,000 were required to earmark appropriate resources for monitoring and evaluation functions. In addition, and subject to the availability of resources, the Programme Planning and Operations Division was committed to conduct at least one thematic or strategic evaluation per biennium. As the policy was finalized in October 2017, the review could not determine whether such earmarking was implemented systematically.

53. In 2017, ECLAC also published a document containing its revised guidelines on preparing and conducting evaluations, with the aim of standardizing the approach taken, clarifying roles and responsibilities and ultimately contributing to greater transparency and coherence, accountability, improved performance and institutional learning.

54. ECLAC evaluation reports were publicly available through the digital repository and the ECLAC home page.[6] The number of evaluations increased in the five years preceding the OIOS evaluation, during which time ECLAC carried out 11 evaluations, whereas it published 13 and finalized two evaluations in the three-year period 2015–2017 (see table). Except for one (the review of the German bilateral cooperation with ECLAC), 14 of those 15 evaluations were on Development Account projects. No subprogramme evaluations were conducted during the period.

ECLAC final assessment reports, 2015–2017

Year	*Evaluation report*
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 10/11 G — Improving the management of resources for the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, August 2015
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 08/09 AE — Understanding potential economic impacts of climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean, August 2015
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 10/11 AP — Strengthening the national capacities of export sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean to meet the challenges of climate change, September 2015
2015	Final evaluation report: evaluation of Development Account project 10/11 H — Strengthening statistical and inter-institutional capacities for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals through interregional cooperation and knowledge-sharing, October 2015

[6] https://www.cepal.org/en/accountability-and-evaluation.

Year	*Evaluation report*
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 08/09 C — Enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women through networking of local knowledge communities, October 2015
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 06/07 AM — Strengthening national capacities to design and implement sustainable energy policies for the production and use of biofuels in Latin America and the Caribbean, November 2015
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 10/11 AQ — Strengthening government and civil society capacity to incorporate economic and social rights into macroeconomic policy, December 2015
2015	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 08/09 Y — Strengthening the capacity of local governments in Latin America to address critical issues arising from internationally agreed development goals, December 2015
2016	Final evaluation report: review of the German Bilateral Technical Cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), January 2016
2016	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 08/09 Z — Strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices in the Caribbean small island developing States to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, February 2016
2016	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 12/13 AX — Social inclusion of youth within a context of increasing violence and insecurity through innovative programmes and evidence-based policies, May 2016
2016	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 12/13 AD — Towards a low carbon economy in Latin America: policy options for energy efficiency and innovation, May 2016
2016	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project 12/13 AC — Towards productivity convergence: trade, financing and technology for small-scale enterprises, September 2016
2017	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project ROA 235-8 — Time for equality: strengthening the institutional framework of social policies
2017	Final assessment report: assessment of Development Account project ROA 236-8 — Strengthening the capacities of Latin America and Asia to develop and improve labour training systems and to protect workers against unemployment

55. To promote accountability, in 2013, ECLAC institutionalized follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations. The follow-up process was also

detailed in the evaluation policy and strategy and the evaluation guidelines published in 2017. To ensure systematic follow-up, consolidated matrices were prepared. At the end of each year, all divisions involved in the evaluation processes were required to update the status of implementation of each of the agreed actions covering a two-year period.

56. To further strengthen the evaluation process, the ECLAC evaluation team disseminated lessons learned and recommendations emanating from ECLAC evaluations. A brochure providing an overview of lessons learned and recommendations covering the period 2011–2014 was prepared in 2015 and made available to all ECLAC staff in early 2016; ECLAC was in the process of completing a similar document for the period 2015–2016.

57. Although ECLAC established an evaluation policy and strategy and evaluation guidelines, and institutionalized follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations, it was unable to establish a separate evaluation unit. Furthermore, ECLAC did not evaluate any of its subprogrammes between 2015 and 2017.

58. This recommendation was partially implemented.

III. Conclusion

59. ECLAC took important steps to implement the six recommendations in the evaluation, which led to a number of positive outcomes.

60. Continuous assessment and deliberations regarding the positioning and relevance of the organization resulted in the merger of two subprogrammes in 2018 with the objective of achieving greater convergence. Mechanisms to incorporate specific priorities of the Caribbean subregion, as determined by CDCC, into the various work programmes were institutionalized. Concrete actions taken to strengthen online access to publications and information improved the effectiveness of ECLAC knowledge dissemination to different stakeholder groups, including national policymakers. A knowledge management strategy was drafted and was awaiting approval by the Executive Secretary. Monitoring and evaluation of ECLAC work were strengthened through institutional guidance and capacity-building.

61. However, as a result of an unsuccessful request and limited resources, a separate independent evaluation unit could not be established, and evaluations of ECLAC subprogrammes were not conducted. ECLAC needs to identify alternative ways of further strengthening its evaluation unit, allowing it to be independent and to evaluate its subprogrammes systematically.

(*Signed*) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
March 2018

Annex*

Comments received from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) welcomes this comprehensive report, which recognizes all efforts made by the Commission in the implementation of the recommendations issued as a result of the programme evaluation of ECLAC (E/AC.51/2015/6).

We are pleased to inform that ECLAC has no additional comments on the report. In relation to the implementation of those recommendations that are still in progress, ECLAC would like to mention that both the ECLAC knowledge management strategy and the ECLAC outreach strategy are in the final stages of revision for approval by the ECLAC Information and Communications Committee and by the Deputy Executive Secretary, respectively. Furthermore, ECLAC appreciates the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) taking note of all the efforts made by the Commission to strengthen the evaluation process.

Finally, ECLAC would like to take this opportunity to thank OIOS for the collaborative approach in this triennial review.

* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services presents below the full text of the comments received from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.